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**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.**

**OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF NATHANAEL GREENE DURING THE
SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN OF 1780-1781**

By

Brian D. Kerl

Colonel, USMC

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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6 November 2007

Abstract

With 1,000 Continentals, and slightly more militia, Nathanael Greene was assigned the mission by General Washington to stop the British in the south and to win the Revolution. During this period, the British restored South Carolina's loyalist government, were victorious at Savannah, Charleston, and Camden, South Carolina, and had numerous Tory sympathizers in the region. Nathanael Greene was to defeat arguably the best army in the world with few regular troops, no supplies, and no local government to call upon for assistance. Further, Greene had to contend with a civil war between the Tories and the Patriots. Despite these hurdles, Greene was able to realize success through his superb example of operational leadership. Many lessons can be applied today. He knew his enemy and accurately identified the enemy center of gravity (COG) and developed a plan to attack the British critical vulnerability, the popular support from the Tory militia. Greene did not win many tactical battles, but was able to occupy the British Army through constant engagements with his forces, which consisted of both Continentals, and militia while the Patriot militia regained local support. Greene integrated the militia forces into his own regular forces and commanded a superb sense for operational logistics. Finally, Greene thoroughly understood the importance of balancing ends, ways, and means.

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Introduction

This paper provides an in-depth analysis of one of America's first true operational military commanders, Nathanael Greene. Greene's Southern campaign during the American Revolutionary War is a case study that demonstrates Greene's application of operational art and leadership. In *Operational Warfare*, Milan Vego states:

"The principal role of operational art is to soundly sequence and synchronize or, simply stated, to "orchestrate" the employment of military forces and nonmilitary sources of power to accomplish strategic and operational objectives in a given theater."¹

The paper will show how Greene demonstrated his mastery of operational art during the Southern campaign as evidenced by his operational leadership.

Greene was a self-educated man, well read in military history and in the arts. He came from a wealthy family in Rhode Island and joined the army in 1775. He developed an early sense for politics through his correspondence with various governors and officials of Philadelphia.² Greene's pedigree included various command and staff positions under Washington prior to assuming command of the Southern Department where he continually met or exceeded Washington's expectations.³ Greene's last assignment, critical to his eventual success in the South, was as Quartermaster General for the Continental Army.⁴

Strategic Setting: Appointed Commander, Greene's Dilemma, and Campaign Strategy.

On 14 October 1780, Washington appointed Greene as the Commander, Southern Department. On his appointment, Washington gave Greene his assignment, "stop the British, save the Revolution, and do it without men, arms, clothing, stores, and provisions."⁵ Greene was the third commander of the Southern Department following Major General Lincoln's surrender to General Clinton at Charleston, S.C. in May, 1780 and then Major General Gates' defeat at Camden, S.C. to Lieutenant General Lord Cornwallis in August, 1780. Upon

Greene's arrival to the theater, the American Army was demoralized and the country was war-weary. To complicate matters, the British had reestablished colonial control in the South, control whose tentacles reached well into the towns and the plantations. Therefore, Patriot fever had all but been extinguished and Tory gangs acted as local enforcers of British policy. In South Carolina, there existed a strong Loyalist militia that Cornwallis hoped to use to end the "American problem". The British controlled the ports, rear areas, and interior lines of communications in the South. The stage was set for the completion of Cornwallis's pacification process as he prepared to move into North Carolina and Virginia. In essence, Cornwallis had used his British regulars as his operational reserve while the Tory militia battled the Patriot militia in a COMPOUND WAR! Overall, the Southern Department was a complete military, political, and logistical nightmare for the Americans.⁶ This dire situation required Greene to develop a creative operational design to accomplish the mission.

Greene had roughly 2,300 men of whom, 1,482 were present for duty. 949 of these troops were Continental Line while the rest were militia, therefore, he was outnumbered by the 8,000 British regulars and 3,000 Tory militia who were available to Cornwallis.⁷ Greene recognized the need for mobility, agility, and the use of hit and run tactics to create havoc in the rear area and disrupt interior lines.⁸ Further, Greene recognized the importance of allowing the Patriot militia (his main effort) to fight the Tory gangs to control the hearts and minds and restore control of the countryside. Greene's insight into the employment of the militia to combat the Tory forces while his Continental regulars (the supporting effort) kept the British regulars occupied was a key part of Greene's operational design. Greene would exploit his Continental and militia force capabilities and protect their critical vulnerabilities

while allowing the British Army to lose the populations hearts and minds through their presence and actions.

Prior to Greene's arrival, Tory militia under the command of British Major Ferguson were defeated by Patriot militia in October 1780 at King's Mountain, North Carolina. Based on this important Patriot victory and the momentum it had generated, Cornwallis decided to delay his occupation of North Carolina and to remain in South Carolina in order to defeat the militia forces in his rear areas. Cornwallis' strategy was based on the Tory militia and his dispersed posts to counter Patriot guerilla efforts and capture their supplies.⁹ Greene would counter Cornwallis through his use of the militia to harass isolated British forces. The militia would cut British lines of communications (LOC) to Charleston, and attack Loyalist militia when Cornwallis concentrated against Greene's Continental regulars. Greene's strategy was designed to wear down the British Army through constant engagements over the rough and unforgiving Carolina terrain and exploit British lengthy lines of operations between British posts. His strategy today would be known as a strategy of erosion. Simultaneously, Greene would use the militia to rule the countryside and reestablish Patriot control there.

Finally, Greene's use of Continental regulars, cavalry, and militia kept the British off balance. Greene used hit and run tactics and never allowed his army to be decisively engaged by the British, engaged to the point of total defeat. If Greene could keep his forces fielded and elusive, he believed he could win through constant military engagements.¹⁰ This demonstrates a classic strategy of erosion.

Early on, Greene assessed that if he split his forces he could cover more ground demonstrating his intuitive understanding of factors (space, force) and provide better coverage to protect the local population from Tories (combat the British pacification

program). Also, Greene thought it would be easier to resupply many smaller forces than one larger force. Greene sent Brigadier General Daniel Morgan to the west to attack the British left flank and rear. Greene sent Lieutenant Colonel Harry “Light Horse” Lee to the east to work with Francis Marion, the “Swamp Fox”, to disrupt British lines of communications. Greene maintained the remainder of the army in the center. His operational design forced Cornwallis to divide his army into smaller forces in order to protect his posts in the south and to pursue Greene’s Army. Greene’s operational movement caused the British to constantly move farther away from their supply base in Charleston. This movement exhausted the British and forced them to live off the land, which detracted from winning civilian hearts and minds. Greene’s strategy resulted in indecisive victories for Cornwallis, which ultimately degraded his core strength, his British regulars.

The first major engagement was at a South Carolina crossroads called the Cowpens in January 1781 (see Map 1 for battles). The battle was one of the few tactical victories for the Americans, and had a lasting impact on the Southern campaign. Morgan was a superb commander, leading expertly in both irregular and regular warfare. He understood how to employ regular forces along with militia forces in order to get the most out of his limited combat power. The psychological effects of the American victory (230 British killed, 600 prisoners) enraged the British and caused Cornwallis to pursue the American forces at all costs. In order to catch Greene, Cornwallis had to reduce his supply load as he pursued the Americans throughout the South Carolina countryside. Cornwallis’s movements depleted his own army of supplies and eventually he was forced to withdrawal to Virginia.¹¹

The second significant battle of the campaign with lasting operational effects was at Guilford Court House in March 1781. The British claimed tactical victory because they held

the field. Cornwallis lost a quarter of his army and many of his best officers.¹² Although Greene did not win the battle, he managed to inflict such damage on the British Army that Cornwallis was forced out of the Carolinas and into Virginia. Operationally, Greene demonstrated an intuitive ability to attack, withdraw, and then attack again. Greene's technique of hit and run as part of a campaign designed to erode the enemy's strength was clearly illustrated at Guilford Court House. Moreover, Greene demonstrated his operational prowess by moving south to focus on the main effort, South Carolina vice pursuing Cornwallis into Virginia following the action at Guilford Court House. This period between December 1780 and March 1781 with Cowpens, the Dan River and Guilford can be considered the turning point of the War in the South.¹³

The final major engagement during the Southern Campaign was at Eutaw Springs in September 1781. The battle produced another British tactical victory, but had the same results for the British as their victory at the Guilford Court House. The British could not defeat Greene's Army and were so bloodied in the process that they could not hold the ground they had just won. Once again, the British suffered nearly 1,000 casualties and the British Army under Stewart, was in no condition to pursue Greene or affect a counterattack.¹⁴ One could argue that the above overview of tactical battles is unsuited for critiquing Greene. However, it was his operational movement and maneuver and his war on the British LOC's and the impediment of Cornwallis' lines of operations that were of import.

How Greene Exercised Operational Leadership

According to Dr. Milan Vego, a key aspect of operational leadership is the ability of the commander to plan and conduct a campaign.¹⁵ Greene demonstrated his ability to do this as he developed his strategy for the Southern campaign. In his estimate of the situation,

Greene analyzed the battlespace, the enemy critical factors, the enemy center of gravity (COG), intermediate and ultimate objectives, and provided his commander's intent. Greene understood that the geography of the South was not easily traversed, and this became a significant contributor to his campaign strategy. The South was crisscrossed by numerous rivers, tributaries, swamps, and back country mountains that would impede the British Army's ability to move supplies inland to sustain it. Conversely, Greene called for survey parties to study the river depths and the currents to note anything that might affect his army's ability to maneuver and move supplies.¹⁶ As Greene correctly assessed the importance of logistics to the overall success of the campaign, he replaced the previous Southern Army's supply officer with Colonel Edward Carrington and a competent deputy, William Davie, as commissary general to sustain his mobile army.¹⁷ Unlike Greene's Army, the British Army was tied to its supply base in Charleston. Greene identified this critical vulnerability and devised a plan to use his militia to attack it. Greene understood operational logistics from his earlier assignment as the Quartermaster General of the Army under Washington. Greene knew he had to separate the British center of gravity (COG), their Army, from its lines of communications.

Greene's initial strategy was based on a partisan force that would interdict the British Army's ability to live off the land until Greene could form a larger conventional force to contest the British Army (time, force factor example).¹⁸ Greene accurately estimated the British critical strength to be the army and the way to mitigate that strength was to use the indirect approach as espoused by the 20th Century Strategist B.H. Liddel Hart. Greene attacked intermediate objectives and never lost focus on Washington's strategic objective of

stopping the British in the south. This is a clear example of Greene using an indirect approach.

Greene knew that he had to develop a plan to attack intermediate objectives with a small, mobile force against a larger, regular enemy force. The smaller dispersed forces would have a better chance of protecting local citizens (Homeland Security aspect) and winning their support. Further, Greene would be able to attack isolated British garrisons throughout the south. Greene believed he could accomplish both military and political intermediate objectives.¹⁹ In order to achieve these objectives and the ultimate objective of stopping the British advance in the south, Greene's theory of victory for the defeat of the British Army was his ability to out maneuver the British Army and to ultimately wear it down logistically.

Greene directed his subordinate commanders to harass the enemy, cut his lines of communications, and confuse the enemy as to his intentions. Greene enabled his commanders to have maximum freedom of action through decentralized execution. One aspect of Greene's Army that was difficult for the British to counter was the fact that Greene's force was highly mobile and elusive. Daniel Morgan employed Greene's idea of a "flying army" which consisted of cavalry and infantry.²⁰ Morgan was assigned the task of harassing enemy forces west of the Catawba River and to win 'hearts and minds'. The other detachment of Greene's Army was sent down the Pedee River under General Huger. In dividing his forces, Greene accepted the operational risk of defeat in detail. However, Greene knew that he could achieve decisive operational results if he could eliminate Cornwallis's secure areas and threaten his isolated posts.²¹ Greene's intent was clear and his commanders accomplished Greene's operational objectives. Based on Greene's operational

maneuver, Cornwallis was forced to divide his forces into three separate groups, failing to outmaneuver Greene's forces (see Map 2). The primary reason Greene was always able to outmaneuver Cornwallis was due to the efforts of his highly capable subordinate partisan leaders operating in the rear areas.

Men such as Francis Marion, Andrew Pickens, and Thomas Sumter were key leaders during the Southern campaign.²² These commanders and others bought time for Greene to build his force of Continental regulars (example of time, force) as they constantly attacked and harassed the Crown's troops. Greene entrusted these men to carry out his intent which illustrates another aspect of Greene's operational leadership in that he surrounded himself with great subordinate commanders in whom he could place his trust. Greene had superb operational vision and enabled his commanders to employ their keen understanding of the terrain to harass the enemy, cut lines of communications, and create confusion among British commanders by using guerilla tactics.²³ In addition to the partisan leaders, Greene employed the foreign service of the Polish engineers who were assigned the task of facilitating the movement of Greene's Army across the Southern region's rivers, streams and tributaries.²⁴

After Cowpens, America's last complete victory in the Southern campaign, Cornwallis moved to destroy Greene's force. In order to lighten his load and speed his pursuit, Cornwallis jettisoned a large portion of his supplies believing his army could live off the land.²⁵ The idea of Cornwallis' pursuit fit nicely into Greene's campaign plan as Greene's Army continually eluded the enemy, it also moved closer to its supply base in Virginia. Conversely, as Cornwallis chased Greene's Army throughout the rugged Carolina and southern Virginia countryside, he moved farther away from his supply base in Charleston. Based on aggressive British pursuit (over the Pee Dee, Yadkin and Dan Rivers), Greene

knew it was time to concentrate his forces for battle. He turned and offered battle at Guilford Court House.

At this point in the campaign, Cornwallis' Army had been low on supplies and Greene decided to attempt to cross the Dan River into Virginia where he could gain additional time to recruit more militia and gather supplies (example of time, force and time, space) for a large battle against the British regulars.²⁶ Greene's strategy was sound but so was the British strategy to counter Greene's move. Cornwallis thought that if he could beat Greene to the Dan River before Greene's forces concentrated, he could cut off Greene's retreat and defeat each section of his army (example of operational maneuver). Unfortunately for Cornwallis, Greene's logistics plan employed staged boats enabling his forces to cross the Dan River and saved the American Army from capture and defeat. Again, Greene's decision to not allow the army (American COG) to be destroyed was critical to the campaign and the Revolutionary cause.²⁷ Alexander Hamilton wrote of Greene's march to the Dan River:

"To have effected a retreat in the face of so ardent a pursuit, through so great an extent of country, through a country offering every obstacle, affording scarcely any resources; with troops destitute of everything...to have done all this, I say, without loss of any kind, army, without exaggeration, be denominated a masterpiece of military skill and exertion."²⁸

Greene covered 230 miles from the Catawba to the Dan and even the British cavalry commander Tarleton remarked, "Every measure of the Americans, during their march from Catawba to Virginia, was judiciously designed and vigorously executed."²⁹ Greene had left behind a small force to harass Cornwallis' rear area and threaten his flanks. This small American force gave the local citizens the appearance of an American pursuit of the British Army in retreat (example of psychological operations, or PSYOPS). Cornwallis's concern of

moving into Virginia with supply problems forced him to remain in North Carolina where he simply declared victory and commenced work on the restoration of British rule in the South.³⁰

Another of Greene's maneuvers that had lasting operational effects was his decision to return to North Carolina and attempt to engage the British Army. Greene's return to North Carolina rallied the Patriots. Also, during this period, as Cornwallis decided to pursue Greene's Army, unprotected Loyalists were harassed by Virginia and North Carolina militia under Lee and Pickens.³¹ Greene's Army was now destined to meet the British Army and engage in the large, decisive battle that Cornwallis sought throughout the campaign.

The Battle of Guilford Court House on 15 March 1781, was a tactical defeat for the Americans, but achieved operational success. Cornwallis was the victor, but the British Army had passed its culminating point, losing twenty five percent of its combat power, and was critically low on supplies. The British eventually retreated to Wilmington to refit and rest, which signaled the end of the Carolina campaign for Cornwallis.³² Since January 1781, Cornwallis had lost 1,501 of his 3,224 troops as illustrated in a quote from a member of British Parliament, "Another such victory would ruin the British Army."³³

Greene's next example of audacious operational maneuver was to turn his back on the British Army after Guilford Court House and head back into South Carolina to commence the second phase of his campaign. The operational focus of this phase would be on the isolated British posts left vulnerable by Cornwallis' retreat. Additionally, his militia forces under Marion, Lee, Sumter, and Pickens would continue to harass the Tories and win hearts and minds of local Patriots to regain control of the countryside.³⁴ Cornwallis left British Colonel Lord Rawdon and 8,000 troops in charge of all British forces in South Carolina.

On 25 April 1781, Greene attacked the British outpost at Hobkirk's Hill in Camden, South Carolina. Although considered a loss for Greene, his army inflicted such damage on the British force that Lord Rawdon evacuated the fort at Camden and moved his army to Charleston, thus yielding the interior and exterior lines of South Carolina to Greene. Hobkirk's Hill illustrated another example of tactical loss, but operational victory for Greene as he made his retreat in good order with minimal losses.³⁵ With Cornwallis on his way to Virginia and Rawdon's Army in Charleston, Greene now had the freedom of action to isolate the other British outposts and free the area from British control. In order to accomplish this, Greene issued his intent to subordinate commanders Marion, and Lee who would capture forts near the coast and Pickens who would capture forts in Augusta. Greene would move against the British Post at Ninety- Six in the west. This "war of the posts" was conducted primarily by partisan forces against eight small posts in South Carolina, and had tremendous operational consequences as Greene's Army of 1,500 men went against 7,254 British soldiers manning the posts and at Charleston of whom, 3,500 were eventually taken prisoner and many were killed or wounded.³⁶ (See Map 1 for location of battles described above).

As each small outpost (Forts Motte, Watson, Granby, Ninety-Six) fell into American hands, the British relinquished their objective of pacification. More importantly, this was due to the Patriot militia forces regaining control of South Carolina and Georgia, not the actions of Continental regulars. The British strategy focused too much on the Continental Army and neglected the Loyalists whom they considered a poorly disciplined group of farmers. The lack of sustained British presence coupled with this neglect and a focus on the American Army caused a decline in Tory morale and support.³⁷ This was a huge operational victory for Greene's forces.

Greene was successful not only due to his superb commanders but the way he played the strengths of the militia against the weaknesses of the Continental regulars and vice versa in order to defeat the British Army and focus on the local population. The key to Greene's operational strategy was to ensure the regulars worked in tandem with the militia forces. When the Continental Army was present, the militia gained freedom of action to attack and harass the Tory militia.

Greene was able to use the militia to employ PSYOPS against the Tory sympathizers and employ strategic communications with the Patriot citizens to win hearts and minds. Also, Greene used spies to maintain situational awareness of the enemy disposition, which facilitated the above.³⁸ One key aspect of faulty intelligence was the fact that the British overestimated the depth of Loyalist sympathy in the South.³⁹ The British had lost control in the South and based on their number of troops, the location of the posts, and the loss of Tory sympathizers, they could no longer protect or influence the peaceful citizens nor could the British ensure their neutrality.⁴⁰

Counter Argument

One could argue that Greene was not as good an operational commander as historians depict. Two reasons for this argument can be put forward. First, Greene did not initially trust militia forces and thought them to be an impediment to operations. Second, Cornwallis had the wrong strategy and lost operational focus, thus becoming an obliging adversary for Greene.

Greene had resisted the employment of militia forces as documented in his correspondence with the Southern Governors indicating he wanted more Continental Line for his army and fewer militia.⁴¹ Greene did not initially respect the militia, victories achieved by

men such as Morgan, who created numerous British casualties at places like Cowpens, contributed to the destruction of the British Army in the South. Men like Marion, Sumter, and Pickens were all talented militia leaders who had experience in dealing with the Indians, living off the land, and the skulking (irregular) tactics used during the French and Indian Wars. Eventually, Greene decided to incorporate militia forces with his Continental regulars to great effect. This enabled Greene to create numerous physical, temporal, and spatial dilemmas for Cornwallis, and to use militia to protect the local population and harass British forces.⁴²

Another argument against the superiority of Greene's operational leadership was the fact that Cornwallis, although a competent officer, lost the operational focus of the campaign through poor strategy. Cornwallis thought that in order to secure his base of operations he had to move to the next major base to the north, for example, in order to secure Charleston he had to move into North Carolina. The problem was that his operational movement north exposed his lines of communications to partisan forces that disrupted British resupply, and left vulnerable the Tory loyalists, causing the British to lose popular support.⁴³

After Cowpens, Cornwallis was too focused on the tactical level and revenge. Cornwallis was so determined to pursue Greene and destroy his force that he ordered all excess baggage and supplies burned in order to lighten his load in pursuit of Greene's forces. This mistake played into Greene's strategy of drawing Cornwallis farther away from his lines of communications in Charleston. By the time the two forces finished battle at Guilford Court House, Cornwallis had lost too many men and was so low on supplies he had to halt his pursuit of Greene and retire to Wilmington, North Carolina.⁴⁴

Finally, Cornwallis was never sure of Greene's intentions. This can be illustrated through Greene's early strategy to divide his army in the face of a more superior force, and Greene's decision to cross the Dan River for the second time and turn his back on Cornwallis while he moved back into South Carolina to begin his "war of the posts" campaign. Both of these actions thoroughly confused the British Army and caused it to constantly react and develop new plans.⁴⁵ Again, Cornwallis lost operational focus by reacting to Greene's moves, moves designed to bait the British commander. Cornwallis constantly fell into Greene's well considered trap.⁴⁶

Lessons Learned

There are several lessons to be learned that apply to the 21st Century joint force commander from analyzing Greene's Southern Campaign. Greene's campaign can be synthesized and directly applied today. The first lesson is that operational commanders must understand that logistics are equal in importance, if not more important than tactical actions. The second lesson is the well worn axiom that you must know your enemy. The third lesson learned is that the militia forces are the most effective means to regain control of their own countryside. The final lesson learned from Greene is that the commander must be able to balance ends, ways, and means in order to be successful.

Nathanael Greene had an intuitive understanding of operational logistics. Greene's background as former Quartermaster General of the Continental Army provided him with a unique operational vision of how to defeat the British Army. Greene knew he had to keep the Southern Army in the field and sustained or the Revolution in the South would be a lost cause. Greene recognized, based on his study of the battlespace, the key to sustaining the army was through the use of boats and supply Depots on the waterways.⁴⁷ Further, Greene

exercised operational movement by dividing his army in two, which alleviated the problem of supplying a large force and made it easier for the two forces to forage. Since Greene's entire campaign plan relied on his ability to keep an army fielded and supplied, logistics played a pivotal role in Greene's campaign.

Another lesson learned from Greene was the importance of knowing your enemy. Greene had faced Cornwallis in the north while serving under Washington and knew he was a bold and aggressive commander. Greene also knew that Cornwallis wanted a decisive victory, a victory Greene was determined to prevent. As long as Greene could maneuver his army, the British were forced to concentrate which left gaps in police duty coverage of the posts. This gap was penetrated by the militia forces that were supported by the Continental Army.⁴⁸ Greene also knew of the British maltreatment of all Americans. Greene wanted to ensure that the loyalists were not in a fight or flight position and they could change sides and be treated fairly.⁴⁹ This idea demonstrated Greene's understanding of how the militia forces were treating each other during the civil war in the South and that if his forces were governed by laws of armed conflict he would be more likely to win more hearts and minds. The lesson here is that Greene changed the character of the war by enforcing basic law of war principles and he provided the Tories with a peace option if they would stop their violent behavior. Operational commanders have to know the enemy and how he fights relative to the impact on the local population.

The third lesson is that the militia forces are the most effective means to regain control of their own countryside. Greene used his militia force as partisans intended to harass the British rear areas, lines of communications, and bait the British away from their supply lines where they were more vulnerable to attack.⁵⁰ Additionally, Greene ensured the

militia would operate against the Tory forces to gain back the towns and villages from British influence. Greene understood the battle of perception dominance and used his militia forces for area coverage to provide security and to legitimize the government in the population's eyes. This lesson is significant in that militia forces are not looked on as an occupying force and normally come from the local towns. This idea fosters the concept of winning hearts and minds.⁵¹

The fourth lesson is the importance of balancing the ends, ways, and means at the operational level. When Greene began his campaign, he had to contend with all aspects of the national instruments of power: Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic (DIME) in order to meet Washington's intent. Green had to build an army and integrate regular and militia forces. He had to contend with a civil war in the South and find a way to win over the local population in an environment not conducive to a quick decisive American victory. Further, he had no local government in South Carolina upon which to rely on for support and had to call upon both Congress and Governor Jefferson in Virginia for assistance with raising an army and acquiring the provisions required to equip it. Greene also had to contend with the best army in the world led by one of Britain's best commanders, Lord Cornwallis.⁵² Greene was able to balance his ends, ways, and means through his operational vision of how to defeat the British Army through their supply lines, wear them down, and inflict heavy casualties on their forces, which, in the end forced Cornwallis to give up his campaign in the Carolinas. Greene employed his forces wisely, never allowing his army to be too badly damaged, or defeated. Greene received high operational returns with low tactical investment.

Conclusion

Future wars may be similar to the one fought during the Southern Campaign. A blurring will occur between the traditional ways of warfare and the use of irregular forces mixed with regular troops. Greene demonstrated the utility of compound warfare and was able to use both regular and irregular forces to create a synergy that was complimentary in order to accomplish the mission.

Greene's ability to keep the army fielded and to outmaneuver his adversary was due to his operational design and the way he employed his forces to attack the enemy's critical vulnerability-his lines of communications. He used his subordinate commanders to exploit their knowledge of the area of operations and carry out his intent. Greene never lost focus of Washington's objective, stopping the British Army in the South. Greene was able to meet Washington's expectations as evidenced by George Washington's comment:

"I confess to you that I am unable to conceive what more could have been done, under your circumstances, than has been displayed by your little persevering and determined army".⁵³ Some historians would contend that the American Revolution was won in the South through Greene's efforts during his Southern campaign.⁵⁴ By the time the British Army reached Yorktown, Virginia, it had suffered from the incessant contacts with Greene's Army and had lost many trained soldiers that the Crown could not replace. Although Greene rarely won major battles, he understood the need to isolate the Tory loyalists, and focus on the population. He understood the environment, he understood the enemy, and he learned how to adapt with the resources available making Greene very relevant for today's operational leaders.

Map 1, Southern Campaign



Notes

- ¹ Milan Vego, *Operational Warfare*, (Naval War College, Rhode Island: 2000), p. 1.
- ² Francis V. Greene, *Nathanael Green*, (Chelsea House Publishers, New York: 1983), pp. 30-33.
- ³ Ibid, pp. 30-99.
- ⁴ Ibid, pp. 97-98. Greene used his sense of operational logistics to identify the British army critical vulnerability- its interior lines of communications. Greene's use of the patriot militia to attack this vulnerability enabled Greene to wear down the army to the point where Cornwallis could not pursue Greene's army after Greene crossed over the Dan River into Virginia. After the battle of Guilford Court House, the British army was exhausted and short on supply. Greene also used his operational logistics background to float supplies on the waterways to resupply his army.
- ⁵ Terry Golway, *Washington's General*. (Henry Holt and Company, New York: 2005), p. 230.
- ⁶ Ibid, pp. 231-233.
- ⁷ Fletcher Pratt, *Eleven Generals, Studies in American Command*, (William Sloane Associates, New York: 1949), p. 12.
- ⁸ Ibid, p. 231.
- ⁹ Piers Mackesy, *The War for America 1775-1783*, (University of Nebraska Press, Ma: 1964), pp. 404-405.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 232-233. Although Greene's forces won very few tactical battles like at Cowpens, or Ninety- Six, he inflicted great damage on the British army, whose losses were hard to replace. In most cases, Greene's losses were minimal and he recovered quickly to engage and harass the British army another day.
- ¹¹ John D. Waghelstein, *Regulars, Irregulars and Militia: The American Revolution*, (Small Wars and Insurgencies: 1995), pp. 140-147.
- ¹² Richard M. Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown, the Campaign that Won the Revolution*, (Henry Holt and Company, New York: 2004), pp. 131-134.
- ¹³ Mackesy, *The War for America 1775-1783*, p. 406.
- ¹⁴ Hugh F. Rankin, *The North Carolina Continentals*, (The University of North Carolina Press, North Carolina: 1971), pp 361. The British Army under Col Stewart engaged Greene's Army at Eutaw Springs 8 September 1781. After defeating the British forces, Greene's men plundered the British positions and became vulnerable to a British counterattack. After the British counterattacked, Greene's men were forced to retreat, however British losses were significant with 436 killed and 450 prisoners. Greene had also lost 503 men in the action. The action, again for Greene reaped operational results as the British retired to Charleston never again to move to the west. At the conclusion of Eutaw Springs, the British were bottled up in Charleston and Wilmington. Cornwallis thought the only way for him to avoid Greene was to move into Virginia. He decided to move to Yorktown with General Clinton's approval.
- ¹⁵ Milan Vego, *Operational Warfare*, p.579.
- ¹⁶ Golway, *Washington's General*, p.238.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, p.240.
- ¹⁸ Mark V. Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War, 1775- 1783*, (The Kent State University Press, Ohio: 1996), p. 224.
- ¹⁹ Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown, the Campaign that Won the Revolution*, pp.109-110.
- ²⁰ Francis F. Greene, *Nathanael Green*, p.183.
- ²¹ Ibid, pp. 183-185.
- ²² Golway, *Washington's General*, p. 233.
- ²³ Waghelstein, *Regulars, Irregulars and Militia: The American Revolution*, pp. 141-143.
- ²⁴ Golway, *Washington's General*, p. 237.
- ²⁵ Ibid, p. 248.
- ²⁶ Greene, *Nathanael Green* , pp199-200.
- ²⁷ Golway, *Washington's General* 252.
- ²⁸ Ibid, p.252.
- ²⁹ Greene, *Nathanael Green*, p.203.
- ³⁰ Golway *Washington's General*, p. 252.
- ³¹ Waghelsteen, *Regulars, Irregulars and Militia: The American Revolution*, p. 146.

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- ³² Thomas B. Bennet, *Early operational Art, Nathanael Greene's Carolina Campaign, 1780-1781*, pp 27-29.
- ³³ Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown, the Campaign that Won the Revolution*, pp131-132.
- ³⁴ Golway, *Washington's General*, p.264.
- ³⁵ Ibid, p.271.
- ³⁶ Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War, 1775- 1783*, p. 224.
- ³⁷ Waghelstien, *Regulars, Irregulars and Militia: The American Revolution*, p. 149.
- ³⁸ Golway, *Washington's General*, p. 239.
- ³⁹ Waghelstien, *Regulars, Irregulars and Militia: The American Revolution*, p.150.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid, p.151.
- ⁴¹ Greene, *Nathanael Greene*, p. 171.
- ⁴² Ibid, p.169.
- ⁴³ John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed*, (Oxford University Press, New York: 1976), p.170.
- ⁴⁴ Golway, *Washington's General*, pp.248-249.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid, pp.252-254.
- ⁴⁶ Burke Davis, *The Cowpens-Guilford Court House Campaign*, (J.B. Lippincott Company, New York: 1962), p.191.
- ⁴⁷ Lawrence E. Babits, , (The University of North Carolina Press, North Carolina: 1998), p.8.
- ⁴⁸ Waghelstien, *Regulars, Irregulars and Militia: The American Revolution*, p. 151
- ⁴⁹ Golway, *Washington's General*, p.273.
- ⁵⁰ Greene, *Nathanael Green e*, p.201.
- ⁵¹ Rankin, *The North Carolina Continentals*, pp. 352-353.
- ⁵² Golway, *Washington's General*, p.276.
- ⁵³ Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown, the Campaign that Won the Revolution*, p.139.
- ⁵⁴ Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping, the Battle of Cowpens*, p.160.

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